

## SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE ARTISAN ACTIVITIES IN EASTERN SLOVAKIA

*Beáta Balogová*

**Abstract.** Artisan activities in Slovak conditions are associated with entrepreneurship and the development of crafts, the operation of which is conditioned by the professional competence acquired via apprenticeship, or is associated with copyright law, where the production is related to mental activity. Our aim is to highlight the work of selected individuals who respect one of the forms and the activity is carried out as a specific artisan activity representing the culture and values of Eastern Slovakia.

**Key words:** *artisan activities, Slovakia, social work, labour market.*

### Roots of Employment Policy and Crafts in Eastern Slovakia

The roots of the employment policy are closely linked to the legitimacy of the social-policy documents. The issue of the legitimacy of social policy documents, as well as programmes (interventions) based on these documents, are currently dealt by expert professionals from different disciplines and different perspectives (Repkova, 2014). Legitimacy in the most general terms means *the recognition of the right to exercise power or to apply authority*. Defining the legitimacy of the social-policy documents can be based on a traditional sociological theory justifying recognition of the right to exercise power and application of authority in three different ways:

- a) The execution of power and authority on the basis of rational reasons (the legitimacy is based on faith in the correctness / legality of established order and the rights exercised by those who are competent);
- b) The execution of power and authority on the principle of traditionalism (recognition of the right to decision-making and exercise of power are based on respect and everyday faith in traditions);
- c) The execution of power and authority on the charismatic basis (starting from the special operation or power of personality that established these rules).

According to traditional approaches, legitimate decisive influence on the formation of documents and interventions have various experts dedicated to specialized organizations (e.g. specialized teams of ministries and other state bodies, scientific research and other specialized institutions). At present, however, decisions based primarily on "unilateral specialization" and disregarding the other kind of experience have been criticized for the so-called *legitimacy gap*. This is based on the low eligibility of adopted programme documents and targets from the perspective of the key players, who consider them to be very general, not specifying the sources and accountability for the achievement of objectives. Another source of questioning the legitimacy of programmes and documents is their weak links among the various levels of management and performance of public administration and lack of cooperation of all key actors in their implementation. Then the authors talk about performance gap (Lendvai, 2004 in: Repkova, 2014). Performance gap and legitimacy gap are criticized mainly because they create too much space for influence of current political priorities and established political cycle, as well as they set up not enough sustainable solutions. One of the ways to avoid the performance gaps and loopholes of legitimacy is to use the mechanisms of open and participatory governance based on the participation and

coordination of activities of different levels of social policy and the creation of networks of co-actors. In this context, it is possible to accentuate the process of *new governance*.

The legitimacy could be considered at the level of a particular *social intervention* when it comes to justifying the eligibility of the nature and extent of intervention, social intervention of professional to a particular person or group of people. This is the definition of legitimacy in the strict sense as the ability to justify the performance of government / intervention. The issue of legitimacy in this case is the question whether the intervention was granted on the basis of an adequate assessment of the social situation of a particular person or group of people or whether it was an abuse of power.

Open and participatory governance is reflected in employment policy and labour market policy. Active labour market policy, as is clear from the title, has to deal with "active" problems associated with the labour market. It is also necessary to point out the confusion of *active employment policies and active labour market policy*. What is important is the influence of politics in general as one of the determining factors in the development of the institutional framework of active labour market policy, some involving activation strategies, which are the result of political decisions at European level (European Employment Strategy). Active labour market policy (ALMP) in Slovakia is based on them. ALMP can be defined as a means of resolving the imbalance between the demand for and supply of labour through certain programmes – relying on orthodox theory of the labour market.

Although in early 2004, *Slovakia* launched the 'new' active labour market policy under the slogan 'work pays', nevertheless it was implemented without prior evaluation of the possible effects and consequences. It brought more changes at the institutional and instrumental levels, which significantly influenced the nature and functioning of the labour market (Brutovska, 2012). Gradually, however, it showed that some changes were not effective enough, respectively, brought negative consequences. This was proved by performed research conducted by the *Institute for Public Affairs* in the framework of the project "Evaluation of social policy aimed at reducing long-term unemployment (2006)," which examined the specifics of social policy at the national level. Typical of this strategy are long-term programmes of active labour market policies, which are strictly individualized (tailored to the unemployed), but have a complex character. They support the motivation of the unemployed by 'voluntary' activation of their competence. There was used a bottom-up principle, the unemployed are seen as subjects of intervention. "It is in fact necessary to select an appropriate strategy to integrate individual, corresponding to individual combination of handicaps in the labour market as well as in other areas. Individual approach plays a central role in determining the individualized activation targets and in the design and application of individualized measures (Sirovatka, 2005, p. 43)."

East Slovak region is combined with the so-called regional unemployment for long term at 20%, which represents a high degree of disadvantage. Clearly it can be concluded that unemployment in Eastern Slovakia has got strongly regional character, and is concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of Slovakia. If we add to the social handicap of an objective character another one from subjective area, for example longterm unemployment, from the total number of the disadvantaged unemployed more than half (54%) belonged to the group of extremely disadvantaged unemployed. This group already has, however, significantly lower chances to be successful in the labour market than just the disadvantaged

persons without job. Precisely for this reason we understand any signs of support for employment whether self-employment as significant activity in the context of active labour market policy. At the same time the issue was closely related to the economic and social conditions. These determine the quality of life of people, both in the subjective and objective terms.

### **The Determinants of the East Regional Employment Policies and Crafts**

Values and value system are an essential determinant of behaviour and activities of an individual. The significance of values in human life is demonstrated by the examination of values in the context of the *European Social Survey* (ESS). ESS as one of the ‘major’ research infrastructure projects in the ESFRI roadmap (*European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures*) is the European research infrastructure focusing on multilateral comparative social research, repeated from 2002 in a two-year cycle with the participation of more than 30 European countries. ESS was initiated by the *European Commission* and the *European Science Foundation* to monitor and interpret the attitudes and values of citizens of European countries in relation to the changing European institutions, and via own approach to promote the use of advanced methods of international comparative research in Europe and worldwide. The incentives like increasing need for self-reflection of the society, increasing needs of ongoing consideration of the effectiveness of policies implemented at different levels of the social system, the intensification of demand of the developed countries’ governments for relevant analytical groundwork for rational decision-making, the need to monitor the effects of the integration process of the European countries were among those incentives that gradually created the conditions for internationally coordinated preparation and implementation of the ESS.

One of the stable modules appointed by ESS is the scale of human values. The common feature of all the definitions concerning values is that they are seen as constructs that have an impact on decision-making and human behaviour, their perception and events. Precisely for this reason it seems important finding value orientation of individuals, since as a result it can be used to predict their subsequent behaviour towards the future (Kentos, 2010). Values are relatively stable characteristics in form of persuasion, abstract trans-situational goals, motivational constructs, standards and criteria. On an individual level, values influence behaviour, vary by relevance, creating a specific grouping. “*When we think about our values, we think about what is important to us in our lives. Each of us professes number of values (e.g. success, security, laxity) with varying degrees of importance. A certain amount can be very important for one person, but may not be important for the other person*” (Schwartz, 2003, p. 2). Schwartz's theory of values is based on the assumption that these are beliefs that are inextricably linked with emotion and not objective, ‘cool’ idea. When values are activated, whether or not conscious of themselves, they produce positive or negative emotions. For those people for whom independence is an important value, negative voltage occurs at the moment when their freedom is threatened. They are angry or desperate when they are unable to pursue protection of their independence or are satisfied and happy, if their independence despite many threats remains unchanged. Accetable example is the situation of craftsmen who are free in their work, performance and creativity. Many of them are the

prototype of an individual who does not want to work in a hierarchical structure under the direction and control of other people.

In the presented context, we assume that the values are stimulating constructs, touching the desired goals that people try to achieve. Values important for the person encourage appropriate action. They are the guiding principle for the selection or evaluation of the action, plans, people and events, that is, the values serve us as standards or criteria. We consider whether action, plans, people and events are good or bad, rightly or wrongly, standing for seeking or rejection depending on whether they facilitate or hinder the achievement of values (Kentos, 2010). Values are listed by mutual importance, one by one; human values create commanded system of preferred values that subsequently characterize them as individuals. The hierarchical character distinguishes them from the norms and attitudes.

The basic feature of values is their incentive nature and our research is based on this feature and is directed towards values of tradition. The inspiration for our research is drawn from the research of Kentos, Istvanikova, Cizmarik (2005) who conducted research on 1,100 respondents from Eastern Slovakia using a scale of Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 2003). This model represents ten value orientations. In our context, we were interested in the selected value dimension protecting the *status quo*, represented by three types of values – tradition, conformity and security. Tradition is created by values such as loyalty, humility and respect for habits. Tradition is subordination to accepted ideas, but also the inclination to religion. The respondents of this research in Eastern Slovakia have a high preference of the value tradition. Statistically significant proved to be the difference between men and women in the value type of tradition, where women scored higher. Even in our research, women have a wider performance. Approaches to the study of values for years have examined human behaviour from the perspective of different disciplines. Even in this context, the value dimension directly reflects the cultural specificities of Eastern Slovakia.

### **Labour market analysis of eastern Slovakia and its social consequences**

The presented analysis is based on the fact that Eastern Slovakia has had one of the highest unemployment rates in Slovakia for a long time. Reasons for this are varied. The gradual growth and deepening unemployment led to the need to uncover the basic mechanisms of the labour market functioning. Brutovska (2012) offers labour market characteristics in terms of economic sociology, using the three basic theories: orthodox, dual and segmentation, which definition is essential for understanding the relationships among actors in the labour market. She emphasizes that economic sociology highlights the importance and the need to expand the functional analysis of labour market via relations creating an extensive network and connections of mutual interdependence. Emphasis is on contractual and employment relationships that were established in the labour market. Without their knowledge, according to her, it is not possible to identify the impacts of an active labour market policy.

The author also says that the problem of the labour market is inherently interdisciplinary matter. Sociology and economics have a specific position in its investigations. Unless the market is a fundamental economic category, the work is one of the basic sociological categories. “*Without the knowledge of basic economic processes taking place in the labour*

*market one cannot affect social aspects of its functioning”* (Kuchar, 2007, p. 12). But it is also valid conversely, i.e. economic analysis of the labour market should involve the social aspects as the economic action is conditioned by social conduct. *“Neglecting the fact that individual behaviour is firmly embedded in networks of social and economic relationships, leads to invoking the impact of ‘culture’ or ‘environment’ where not otherwise there can be derived the basic trends of the labour market”* (Granovetter, Swedberg, 1992, p. 256). The basic postulate of economic analysis of the labour market is intention and efficiency. It is based on the premise that the employee invests in their working capacities to maximize their lifetime income (Mares, 1994). He focuses on himself and the consequences of his actions and the environment represents for him an obstacle to be overcome in order to achieve his objectives and meet his needs. To achieve the objective he uses the capital at his disposal. From the perspective of sociology labour market can be defined as a dependent subsystem. It is under the influence of other ‘actors’. It works in *“networks of social interaction and sociodemographic constraints”*. That is, the actual labour market is affected by a number of variables that can affect it at any given time. Actors (employers and employees) do not act freely because the conditions under which they enter the labour market are different. Mares (2002, p. 55) argues that in terms of sociological perspective, the labour market is usually *“understood as a social system and the field of action of social institutions that serves the allocation of employment (as specific social roles). We cannot therefore consider only wage mechanisms, but it is necessary to bear in mind that social norms and social institutions form the subtext of movement in the labour market (rental of workforce, job searches, status and prestige of occupations, wage negotiations, the nature of work and so on.)”* Sociology considers broader may be affected by factors such as family, ethnicity, age and etc. Great importance is attributed to cultural and social capital.

Another way of understanding the labour market is presented by Fligstein and Fernandez (1988) who talk about ‘*labour markets*’ and ‘*job markets*’, which complement each other. The differences between them are the prospects of view: in terms of an individual, employers compete for his services; in terms of employers, individuals compete for jobs. Both markets are only part of the distribution of persons to jobs. Sociology thus seeks to highlight the ethics of labour market, i.e. equity in the labour market compared to the economic ‘efficiency’. Free labour market is possible, but the uncontrolled labour market is not the only free labour market and ultimately nor fair. characteristics of the employees for the work performance that.

In this context, we can state that in orthodox theory support of market competition is crucial to eliminate unemployment. Time spent on strict regulation of the labour market and the protection of minimum wages are largely unnecessary (Nickell, Layard, 2005). In a society oriented to work and output and resting on the institution of free labour contract, there arises decomposition of the particular features of social life. This creates an abstract model of a standard employee whose conduct is influenced by market mechanisms on the one hand and strictly ‘individual’ performance characteristics of the other hand (Mares, 2002).

In connection with the solution of unemployment in Eastern Slovakia, we face arguing that it is a typical dual market space. In this case, the primary manifestation of the region is the development of secondary jobs. It concerns jobs with low wages, poor working conditions, precarious employment and a lack of opportunities for advancement. The second group is

the primary jobs, which are characterized by relatively high wages, good working conditions and opportunities for a better-paid job. Whereas, in the Eastern Slovak regions there is absence of bigger industrial parks, construction output is missing, then basically we just talk about the development of secondary jobs.

Therefore, in this context, it is possible to talk about an attempt to create conditions for the development of the primary labour market, which is characterized by better legislative protection and is typical for both the private and public sectors. Employees in this market are characterized by their creativity, independent problem solving, own personal initiative, professional standards of work, volunteering and individual motivation.

Returning to the programmes of active labour market policies it can be noted that these programmes increasing employment by supporting job creation, notably through support for selfemployment, have proven to be effective in the longer term, though they are expensive. As it turns out, ALMP programmes to increase employability and increasing employment should be balanced to ensure their efficiency with regard to the labour market and in relation to the target groups of the unemployed.

The solution is shown in the form of social interventions at the regional level. Social policy measures are efficiently integrated into the individualized life situations of people on order to help solve them. But also there can be applied vice versa conditional relationship, when the variable experience of adverse life situations of people is related to a wider social problem and this experience is generalized in it and then adequate social policy tools to address this issue are looked for. *Social interventions* as instruments of social policy appear to be the tool for solutions in a disadvantaged region of East Slovakia. They can be defined according to L. Musil (2013) who uses the term '*social intervention*' on the aggregated denomination for various kinds of measures aimed at changing social environment of people who have problems in living conditions or relationships. It is also a measure which affected people consciously apply as a tool to meet their targets leading to overcoming their problems. The issue of social interventions is directly related to the question of definition of the relationship among social policy and social work, and other supporting disciplines.

In this context, according to K. Repkova (2014) we can formulate assumptions of social policy, namely morality, legitimacy and rationality pursuit of social interventions. In the case of social policy, the social interventions address social problems of people and change their wider environment (village, city, region, state, transnational community). We can speak about social intervention here. Dichotomous approach is characteristic for the typology of social interventions. According to the way of their performance, L. Musil (2013) deals with the situational and procedural social interventions. In case of situational social interventions, the approach to the problems of people is based on the context of other circumstances of their life situation. Their unique context is evaluated and built on it; there are sought and applied procedures appropriate to the specific characteristics of the situation. Procedural social intervention to the people's demands for assistance needs to be treated as just fixing the problem, the solution of which is set in advance via defined types and forms of assistance (social measures, interventions). To divide social interventions author uses the criterion of the ratio of personal and impersonal interactions among people, to whom the measures officiate. Then he talks about micro-social, mezzo-social and macro-social interventions.

G. S. Hutchinson (2013) points to the dichotomous nature of social interventions. According to the author, the assisting professionals can be involved in two theoretical ways, with different implications for practice:

- A. *Deductive approach* – is based on the texts of formal documents (e.g. the obligations of the UN), under which implications for practice are identified. Social interventions (policies and programmes) are derived from existing legislation and therefore the rights and obligations under it are determined for people in different situations. The main task of social policy is defined deductively, that is, as “... *convergence of services assessing the need*” (Hutchinson, 2013, p. 459), with no consistent approach to persons other than to an individual and citizens with full rights. Comparatively, procedural-based social interventions are built on the existence of an advance defined measures where the citizen’s request is to be ‘adapted’ to address his own particular problem and is assessed whether it is entitled to satisfy his claim, and therefore the implementation of the intervention (Musil, 2013). The approach is theoretically grounded in the basic theses of social and legal constructivism, particularly in the thesis of typology of reality upon which there are constituted and institutionalized some forms of social interventions for certain life situations and behaviours of people (Navratil, 2013). Rules for the provision of social interventions exist “forward” and specify the main optics of assisting professional to assess partial aspects of the life situation of the person (or persons in any other type of social risk). Conformity of the existing rules to the designed aspects of the life situation of the person creates a legal basis for (not) providing social intervention.
- B. *Inductive approach* – is based primarily on personalized and authentic problems of particular person, which are then articulated within the optics of the human rights and applied to the political dimension. The basic thesis is that the nature of human issues should determine the nature of social interventions, not vice versa. In terms of L. Musil (2013) it concerns social interventions organized and carried out in situational manner. Inductive approach and the corresponding situation design of solutions thus do not tolerate typing of situations and solutions, generalization or approach to a group of people on the basis of a common character (World, 2011). Inductive approach is thus theoretically closer to objectivism built on the respect to the existence of an independent reality of the social situation of man (Navratil, 2013), which should not be considered through preestablished social and legally constructed regulations.

According to L. Musil (2013, p. 240, In: Repkova, 2014), it is desirable that the assisting professionals use in particular micro and mezzo-social situational interventions mostly those that are “... *to be tailor made, which is related to the specific life circumstances of individuals and their families, or living conditions of the target groups or communities of interest within a municipality or organization*”. In the present context, we view social interventions as a space for self-employment to develop and create an area for a renaissance of folk crafts in Eastern Slovakia. This allows an artisan to become unique in space and time. Their product has a specific nature, attracts customers with its originality, creativity, uniqueness of its processing and provides customers with the internalisation of their cultural patterns (habits, customs and traditions), thereby acquiring a specific (often incalculable) value.

## Conclusion

Values and value system are an essential determinant of individual behaviour and actions. The significance of values in human life demonstrated also the examination of values in the context of the European Social Survey - ESS. ESS as one of major research infrastructure projects in the ESFRI roadmap (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) is a European research infrastructure for multilateral comparative social research that is repeated since 2002 in a two-year cycle with the participation of more 30 European countries. ESS was initiated by the European Commission and the European Science Foundation with aim to: monitor and interpret the attitudes and values of citizens of European countries in relation to the changing European institutions; with its own approach to promote the use of advanced methods in international comparative research in Europe and in Slovakia. The need for self-reflection of society increases, also increases requirements of assessment of the effectiveness of policies implemented at different levels of the social system, demand for relevant analytical groundwork for rational decision-making is getting stronger, the need of monitor the effects of the impact of European integration processes is increasing – all that can be included into the starting points and stimulus that need to be specify and targeted to young people. One of the stable modules of this survey is a scale of human values. The common feature of all definitions of the values is that they are seen as a construct that has an impact on decision-making, human behaviour and human perception. For this reason it seems to be important to find value orientation of individuals, since is possible to some extent predict their subsequent behaviour towards the future (Kentoš, 2010). Values are relatively stable characteristics in the form of believes, abstract, transsituational goals, motivational constructs, standards and criteria. On an individual level values influence behaviour and are changing according to its relevance, creating a specific groups. Comparison of research results (ESS) and Schwartz's theory of value orientation research can be considered as a productive impulse and a serious basis for conducting research of the young generation in Slovakia.

## References

1. BRUTOVSKA, G., 2012. *Aktívna politika trhu práce a problémy jej evaluácie (na príklade vybraných nástrojov)* [Dizertačná práca]. Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave. Katedra sociologie. Školiteľka: Doc. PhDr. Gabriela Lubelcova, PhD. Bratislava: FiF UK.
2. GRANOVETTER, M. – SWEDBERG, R. 1992. *The sociology Of Economic Life*. 2. dopl. vydanie. Standford: Westview Press. ISBN 978-0813397641.
3. IŠTVANIKOVA, L. – ČIŽMARIK, M. – KENTOŠ, M., 2005. Hodnoty a hodnotova orientacia osob s rodinnými povinnosťami v košickom kraji. In: *Človek a spoločnosť*, No. 8, pp. 9-28. ISSN 1335-3608.
4. IVO, 2006. *Evaluácia sociálnej politiky zameranej na zníženie dlhodobej nezamestnanosti*. Vyskumna sprava. [online]. Bratislava: Inštitut pre verejne otázky. [cit. 2016-03-02]. Dostupne na: <http://www.ivo.sk/4908/sk/aktuality/evaluacia-socialnej-politiky-zameranej-naznizenie-dlhodobej-nezamestnanosti-%E2%80%93-vyskumna-sprava-zprojektu-k-dispozicii>.

5. KENTOŠ, M., 2010. Hodnotové orientácie. In: *Európska sociálna sonda* (4). Bratislava: Universum. pp. 133-151. ISBN 978-80-89046-65-2.
6. KUCHAR, P., 2007. *Trh práce*. Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum. ISBN 978-80-246-1383-3.
7. MAREŠ, P., 2002. *Nezaměstnanost jako sociální problém*. Praha: SLON. ISBN 80-86429083.
8. MUSIL, L., 2013. Socialni intervence. In: MATOUŠEK, O. a kol. *Encyklopedie sociální práce*. Praha: Portal, pp. 238-241. ISBN 978-80-262-0366-7.
9. NAVRATIL, P., 2013. Socialni konstruktivismus. In: MATOUŠEK, O. a kol. *Encyklopedie sociální práce*. Praha: Portal, s.r.o., 2013, pp. 26-31. ISBN 978-80-262-0366-7.
10. REPKOVA, K., 2014. Socialna politika v socialnej práci. In: BALOGOVA, B. a kol. (2015) *Kompendium sociálnej práce pre bakalársky stupeň štúdia*. Prešov: Pavol Šidelsky – Akcent print. ISBN 978-80-89295-59-3.
11. SCHWARTZ, S. H., 2003. Basic Human Values: Their Content and Structure across Cultures. In: TAMAYO, A. – PORTO, J. (Eds.): *Valores e trabalho (Values and work)*. Brasilia, Editora Universidade de Brasilia 2005.

**Author's contact details:** prof. PhDr. Beáta Balogová, PhD., Faculty of Arts of Prešov University in Prešov, ul. 17. Novembra No. 1, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia, [beata.balogova@ff.unipo.sk](mailto:beata.balogova@ff.unipo.sk).